

**SUBJECT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 3 - MONDAY, 17 SEPTEMBER 2018**

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE SUBJECT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 3  
HELD IN COUNCIL CHAMBER - CIVIC OFFICES ANGEL STREET BRIDGEND CF31 4WB  
ON MONDAY, 17 SEPTEMBER 2018 AT 10:00**

Present

Councillor JC Spanswick – Chairperson

SE Baldwin	TH Beedle	N Clarke	P Davies
DG Howells	JC Radcliffe	RMI Shaw	RME Stirman
G Thomas	E Venables		

Apologies for Absence

A Hussain, DRW Lewis, JH Tildesley MBE and DBF White

Officers:

Julie Ellams	Democratic Services Officer - Committees
Gail Jewell	Democratic Services Officer - Scrutiny
Greg Lane	Head of Democratic Services
Michael Pitman	Business & Administrative Apprentice

Invitees:

Councillor Huw David	Leader
Andrew Hobbs	Group Manager - Street Works
Sian Hooper	Waste and Cleaner Streets Manager
Zak Shell	Head of Neighbourhood Services
Mark Shephard	Corporate Director – Communities

52. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor P Davies declared a personal interest in Agenda Item 5, Waste Services, because he had a family member working at Kier, Tondu.

53. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting of Subject Overview and Scrutiny Committee 3 dated 23 July 2018 be approved as a true and accurate record.

54. WASTE SERVICES

The Corporate Director Communities introduced a report advising the Committee in relation to the delivery and performance of the Council's Waste Services Contract. He explained that since the introduction of the new waste and recycling collection service on 5 June 2017 there had been gradual yet significant improvement. There were challenges to the service from time to time in isolated locations but officers and the contractors were working closely to overcome them. He explained that responses to the specific questions raised at the last meeting were included in the report and they provided evidence to the improvement in performance. He added that the performance overall was now considered to be consistent with industry standards although he recognised there were some issues not yet fully resolved. He explained that BCBC had previously ranked 21 out of 22 but now BCBC was ranked 2 out of 22. This did not reflect a full years collections and it was anticipated that the recycling rate would be

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more than 70%. He added that the current level of missed collections was also below the 2016 level.

The Regional Manager for Kier, Mr Maz Akhtar provided some statistics supporting the improvements to the service. He explained that there appeared to be a correlation between requests for containers and households exceeding 2 bags of waste. Requests were higher than in previous years but starting to settle. The Regional Manager reported that call centre volumes were now in line with the original contract and more than 7000 events had been raised on the website since the new system went live. This method was being promoted and a help leaflet had been circulated in June with the calendars.

He explained that there had been a 15% increase in the registration for the absorbent hygiene product service. The uptake for garden waste collection had increased and the online portal had attracted more than 1800 customers. When the statistics for the last three years were analysed, the recent figures were the best to date (apart from a blip in February due to inclement weather).

The Committee noted the rise in the recycling rates following the introduction of the new waste and recycling collection services in June 2017 and thanked the public of Bridgend for embracing and taking part in the new recycling scheme.

A Member referred to garden waste collection and the confusion resulting from two calendars being issued, showing different collection days. The Regional Manager explained that it had been difficult to estimate the take up of the service with more than 650 customers in one area and only 7 in a neighbouring area. Because of this they had had to change the days resulting in a second calendar being issued. The take up would be established earlier next year and this would allow them to plan more effectively.

Members referred to the specific questions raised at the 22 November 2017 meeting and the responses provided in the report and asked additional questions or for certain points to be clarified.

Question 2, The future recycling of black plastic.

Members asked for an update on progress. The Regional Manager explained that the recycling markets for recovered plastics were contracting and so this made it very expensive to recycle. The Head of Neighbourhood Services reported that producers were changing the colour of microwave trays and as a result the volume of black plastic was reducing. The Leader said that supermarkets and manufacturers should be encouraged to use alternatives. The Committee requested that the Leader make contact with all local supermarkets and food manufacturers to phase out the use of black plastic and introduce alternative recyclable plastics in their place. In addition to this, Members recommended that a letter be drafted to Welsh Government encouraging them to enforce this approach.

Question 3, The performance of the call centre.

A Member raised concerns about the way the call centre handled calls from residents with speech impediments and other communication problems. He stated that it was important that all residents could access the call centre and be treated appropriately. Members asked to receive information detailing the systems Kier had in place to deal with these calls.

A Member asked what provisions were in place for Welsh speakers. The Regional Manager confirmed that there was a separate call centre which dealt with Welsh

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language calls although the take up had been very low and in the last month no calls had been received.

Question 4, Plans for Kier to assist with recycling from BCBC offices and schools.

Scott Saunders, the Business Manager for Kier explained that since the report had been published, conversations were ongoing with schools regarding the introduction of card and food waste collections.

Question 5, The recruitment of senior managers and front line operative staff associated with the Bridgend contract.

The Committee thanked Kier for their support with the Community Clean ups that had been conducted in local areas with regard to the resources that they had provided. A Member asked if they had enough staff to cover when staff were sick or on leave. The Regional Manager explained that all senior management posts had been filled and the team worked well together and had delivered significant improvements. They did rely on agency staff and had to wait 12 weeks before recruiting individuals. In general the industry was over reliant on agency staff and this was a nationwide problem. The Regional Manager added that wherever possible they did try to recruit local people on full time contracts. This process had improved since employing a local manager. A Member stated that temporary staff and changing teams increased the risk of missed collections.

Members asked what percentage of staff were employed on zero hours contracts. The Regional Manager said that as far as he was aware, there were none but he agreed to check.

In relation to the statement concerning Kiers over-reliance on agency staff and the problems that occurred with missed collections when continuity was not adhered to, Members recommended that Kier employ permanent members of staff as soon as vacancies arose. The Committee further recommended that Kier looked to utilise fixed term contracts for agency staff where possible to ensure short term security for their workers.

Question 6, The instalment of polystyrene balers and webcams at CRCs.

Members asked for an update on progress. The Regional Manager reported that webcams were installed at Maesteg and Brynmenyn sites but progress had been frustratingly slow. The Tythegston site was a problem because there was no line to the site and this would be expensive to install taking into account future plans to move the site. The Business Manager reported that he was looking at a local processor for polystyrene and whether or not a baler was required with the reduction in residual tonnes. He was also looking at options for polystyrene to be returned into packaging. The Head of Neighbourhood Services added that it was useful for the public to be able to see what was happening at each site and confirmed that they would contact IT to provide a link to the site on the website.

In relation to the recycling rate figures, Members requested a breakdown of data to show what percentage was gained from recycling collected at our Community Recycling Centres and the amount acquired from recycling collected at the kerbside.

Question 7, Change of days for communal collections and improvements since the change.

A Member stressed that the additional collection day in Wildmill was for recycling and not for the collection of residual waste. There continued to be issues in this area however it was noted that there had been incremental, but slow improvements. The Waste and Cleaner Streets Manager added that there had been improvements in certain areas over the last 9 months and the Education Officers were helping to address the remaining issues in this area. The Group Manager Street Works added that officers had been working closely with Members to tackle communal collections.

The Committee thanked Kier for the supplementary day provided for recycling in Wildmill and for the additional work carried out in communal areas. Members stated that improvements were being made but waste in this area still remained an issue. Members requested statistics in relation to other communal collections in the rest of the County Borough for comparison with the collections currently undertaken in Wildmill.

Question 8, The impact of the new collection vehicles on collection rounds.

A member asked for further information regarding the statement that there was no need to pre-sort at the Kerbside. The Regional Manager explained that this was in relation to efficiency for the operatives and not the residents.

A Member raised the issue of drivers leaving their vehicles to help with the collection and accidents that had occurred as a result. The Business Manager explained that a new system had been installed on all vehicles called Ident. Whenever a driver left the vehicle, it would automatically shut off including the brakes. The Member thanked Kier and said that was a positive step forward.

Members discussed the Absorbent Hygiene Products service which had seen an increase in demand of 15%. Members were advised that currently this was taken to Ammanford because this was the only place that dealt with it. Members asked if the storage area of collection vehicles was sealed off from the driving cab area. The Regional Manager explained that they were currently looking at various options to achieve this and improvements would be made as soon as possible. The Group Manager Street Works confirmed that WG were looking for alternatives and working collaboratively with neighbouring Councils. The Committee welcomed the fact that Welsh Government and the Council were actively seeking alternative local treatment facilities from working collaboratively with neighbouring Councils for the disposal of Absorbent Hygiene Products.

Question 9, Outcome of the review of BCBC in house Street Scene enforcement activity.

A Member raised the issue of recurring issues with blue and black bags on the streets for up to a week. There appeared to be problems with private landlords and tenants and the message not getting through to them.

The Head of Neighbourhood Services explained that work was underway on tender documentation to seek a litter enforcement partner in readiness for the commencement of enforcement activities during spring 2019. This would cover such issues as dog fouling. Enforcing the two bag rule and refuse would remain with the teams and the education officers. The Waste and Cleaner Streets Manager explained that they would prefer to get compliance rather than issue fixed penalty fines.

Due to the ongoing issues in some wards with waste and co-operation with the two bag rule, Members recommended that every effort should be made to educate residents about the recycling and residual waste collections. Members also recommended that the following proposals be explored:

- The implementation of a welcome pack for new tenants of private landlords and registered social landlords;

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- To make contact with local estate agents to confirm they were informing new residents moving into the area where and how they should dispose of their waste;
- To include details of the waste service with the council tax bills.
- Link up with Housing Benefits, Council Tax and the Department of Working Pensions to investigate the feasibility of details of the waste service being sent out with correspondence from these departments.

Question 12, A review of the Absorbent Hygiene Products bags be considered to include the monetary impact against the environmental impact.

The Head of Neighbourhood Services explained that the AHP service cost represented 4.38% of the overall waste contract and disposal costs and contributed approximately 2% of the total recycling tonnage. The collection could be cancelled and a saving made but was it the morally the right thing to do. A budget consultation was about to be launched and one question referred to the removal of the AHP service where a potential saving could be made but there would be an impact on recycling.

Question 13, Clarification on the entry of vehicles to the CRC's and how a commercial vehicle was determined.

A Member referred to confusion at the CRC regarding vehicle descriptions and interpretation of the policy. The Waste and Cleaner Streets Manager explained that vans and lorries were not accepted at any site and the contact centre would be able to clarify any matters.

Members understood that the policies and protocols were in place to ensure no trade waste was being disposed at any of the sites however the Committee recommended clearer communication and publication of the procedures in place be provided for both the public and for members of staff within the CRC.

Question 14, Sanctions for non-compliance.

A Member explained that he appreciated confidentiality regarding sanctions but it was important that confidence was restored. The Corporate Director Communities understood the concerns but he had been advised by legal that he could not disclose this information. He did explain that there had been issues at the start of the contract that did result in significant financial penalties to reflect under performance but this had since reduced.

A Member referred to the monthly call statistics for July 2018 and asked if the figures could be presented as a percentage in future to make the table easier to understand. The Regional Manager said he would prepare the data that way in future.

Members suggested that Member referrals should be filtered by subject matter to support the collation of what concerns were being raised within each Directorate. The Committee recommended that a dropdown box be added or a coding system be investigated.

The Committee recommended that Waste should be retained on the Forward Work Programme and presented to Subject Overview and Scrutiny Committee 3 in approximately 6 months' time.

The Leader thanked residents, Members, officers and Kier for working patiently together to resolve any issues. There had been huge improvements which would hopefully continue.

The Scrutiny Committee thanked the Cabinet Members and Kier for attending the meeting.

**General Comments**

- The Committee note the rise in the recycling rates following the introduction of the new waste and recycling collection services in June 2017 and would like to thank the public of Bridgend for embracing and taking part in the new recycling scheme.
- The Committee compliment the support of Kier in Community Clean ups that have been conducted in local areas with regard to the resources that they have provided.
- The Committee would like to thank Kier for the supplementary day provided for recycling in Wildmill and for the additional work carried out in communal areas. Members state that improvements are being made but waste in this area still remains an issue and await the potential developments imposed by the education officers.
- The Committee welcome the fact that Welsh Government and the Council are actively seeking alternative local treatment facilities from working collaboratively with neighbouring Councils for the disposal of Absorbent Hygiene Products.
- With reference to Appendix B - Monthly Calls Statistics for July 2018, for ease of reference, Members request that when this information is provided in the future that the data is presented as percentage of calls taken.

**Recommendations**

- 1 The Committee request that the Leader makes contact with all local supermarkets and food manufacturers to phase out the use of black plastic and introduce the utilisation of alternative recyclable plastics in their place. In addition to this, Members recommend that a letter be drafted to Welsh Government encouraging them to enforce the aforementioned approach.
- 2 In relation to the statement concerning Kiers over-reliance of agency staff and the problems that occur with missed collections when continuity is not adhered to, Members recommend that Kier employ permanent members of staff as soon as vacancies arise. The Committee further recommend that Kier look to utilise fixed term contracts for agency staff where possible to ensure short term security for their workers.
- 3 Due to the ongoing issues in some wards with waste and co-operation with the two bag rule, Members recommend that a conscious effort is made by Officers in relation to educating residents of the Borough of the recycling and residual waste collections. Members recommend that the following proposals are explored:
  - The Implementation of a welcome pack for new tenants of private landlords and registered social landlords;
  - To make contact with local estate agents to confirm they are informing new residents moving into the area of where and how they must dispose of their waste;
  - To include details of our waste service within the send out of the notice of council tax
  - Link up with Housing Benefits, Council Tax and the Department of Working Pensions to investigate the feasibility of details of our waste service being sent out with correspondence from these departments.Members also relayed their concerns with the contract length of the current education officers, as it is evident that the role they undertake is still critical in some areas.
- 4 To assist with information from Member referrals being filtered by subject matter to support the collation of what concerns are being raised within each Directorate, the

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Committee recommend the possibility of the addition of a dropdown box or a coding system be investigated.

5 In relation to the clarification of vehicle and sizes permitted to enter the Council's Community Recycling Centres (CRC), although Members understand that the policies and protocols are in place to ensure no trade waste is being disposed at any of our sites, the Committee recommend clearer communication and publication of the procedures in place is provided for both the public and for members of staff within the CRC.

6 The Committee recommend that the issue of Waste is retained on the Forward Work Programme and for continuity is presented to Subject Overview and Scrutiny Committee 3 in approximately 6 months' time.

### **Additional information**

- Members have asked to receive information detailing the systems Kier have in place when receiving calls from citizens with speech impediments and other communication problems to ensure they can access the call centre and be treated appropriately.
- Members queried whether Kier has enough contracted staff to cover all posts at Tondu site?
- Members seek clarification of the number of staff that are employed under zero hour contracts.
- In relation to the recycling rate figures, Members request to receive a breakdown of data to show what percentage was gained from recycling collected at our Community Recycling Centres and the amount acquired from recycling collected at the kerbside.
- Members would like to receive statistics in relation to other communal collections in the rest of the County Borough for comparison with the collections currently undertaken in Wildmill.
- Due to the Absorbent Hygiene Products being considered as a budgetary issue by the Council, the Committee queried whether a proposal for incinerating the Absorbent Hygiene Products for energy had been explored, to possibly gain an income rather than expenditure for its disposal.

### 55. URGENT ITEMS

None

The meeting closed at 12:15